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# HOME TO HIM'S MUVVER



MARGARET PRESCOTT MONTAGUE

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To Marion.







# Home to Him's Muvver

By

Margaret Prescott Montague



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TO  
MELINDA

THE GODDAUGHTER

WHO CALLED MY ATTENTION TO THESE THINGS

THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS DEDICATED

WITH THE AFFECTIONATE GRATITUDE

OF THE AUTHOR

Gift, Barrett, 1951

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## PREFATORY NOTE

Since the appearance of this little essay in *The Atlantic Monthly*, the author has received so many requests for copies, and letters urging its re-printing, that it has seemed worth while to issue it in its present form.



## Home to Him's Muvver



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I AM the happy possessor of a small goddaughter, a little lady of some three years, who is insatiably fond of stories. She prefers to have them told to her, but failing that, she will tell them herself. One of her favorite stories begins, "Once 'ere was a lil' boy, an' him went out on a bee's tail." I suppose what the little boy really went out on was a bee's trail; but to

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go out on its tail would certainly lead one to expect a much more unusual, not to say poignant, adventure.

I am not now concerned, however, with the beginnings of her stories, but rather with their invariable ending, which is always, "An' him went home to him's muvver." Bears, lions, tigers, even elephants and crocodiles, pass through the most agitating and breathless adventures,—adventures which, as a German acquaintance phrases

it, "make to stand up the hair,"—but in the end they all go home to their mothers. Should a careless Godmother omit this concluding phrase she is at once met by the horrified exclamation, "*Didn't* him do home to him's muvver?" and such a look in wide baby eyes as though the universe were tottering, that all possible haste is made to hurry the delinquent hero home to the maternal bosom. Is not this a far more satisfactory conclusion than the old impossible fairy-

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tale one—"And so they married and lived happily ever after"?

"And him went home to him's muvver." What a port after stormy seas! How restful—how soul-restoring—how human!

An astonishing bit of wisdom to be evolved by a little person of three! And does it not embody a deep truth which has come down to us from the gray dawn of Time, preserved in many an old myth? One remembers Antæus, for instance, whose strength was always re-

newed every time he touched his mother Terra, the earth. But my goddaughter's formula is matched by a far more wonderful story. One of the most often recounted adventures of her heroes is, "An' him ate a lot of can'y an' got very sick, an' *ven* him went home to him's muvver." "I will arise and go to my Father—" Is not hers an exquisite baby version of the Prodigal Son, freshly inspired, I do not doubt, by the great Source of all inspiration? And

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has not her little tongue expressed a deep need felt by us all?

Just what I mean by a going-home to one's mother in this larger sense, is perhaps a little difficult to define. Yet, surely, it must be a universal experience. Have we not all at some time—often following a period of confusion and stress of circumstances—suddenly experienced that deep sense of finding ourselves where we belonged? A sense of restfulness, of home-

coming, of general rightness and well-being? It is a sloughing off of the non-essential and the trivial, and a shifting of the spirit into deeper and simpler channels; a pause, when in the midst of all this mad dance of time and circumstance one gets a sudden, enlarging glimpse of Truth and of Eternity.

I have been home to my mother very many times, and by very many different paths. Sometimes by way of books, when I have stumbled upon a

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revelation of thought which presses open spiritual doors; sometimes by way of familiar music; again, and perhaps most often of all, led home by Dame Nature, my hand in hers.

Every spring there is a going-home to my mother for me, when as May swings into her perfumed place among the months she finds me returned to a well-loved little corner of the world. There I am faced by the wide sweep of mountains which

I have known always. I wander up and down long familiar paths, dig in old flower borders, and greet old friends. The trivial and ephemeral accumulations of the city winter melt away in this genial atmosphere of out-of-doors, but what has been gathered of permanence, the spirit takes up and knits into its being. All the spinning confusion of life is tranquilized and for a little while the soul kneels down in obedience to that world-old command, "Be still, and know

that I am God," "the spirit of Truth within thee."

Ah! these Heaven-sent periods when the littlenesses of Time are swept away in a great in-rushing realization of Eternity!

Out of the past I recall one such glorified moment. It comes back to me only in fragmentary memories, and yet the essentials are all there. I remember first a confused, hot, somewhat disorganized kitchen. Unexpected visitors had arrived just at supper-time, and there was bustle

and haste and some apprehension lest the larder should fall short. I remember hurrying out across the back yard to the storeroom, and then, all at once, out there in the wide, soft darkness, I remember I stood still. The heat and confusion of the kitchen were almost in touch of me, and yet were infinitely far away. For an instant, I withdrew into a place of peace. I remember whispering through the dark and stillness, childishly enough, no doubt, "Are you

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there, little soul?" Afterwards I went swiftly on my errand, and presently was gathered back into the kitchen's confused bustle. But now all was changed. For that glorified instant out there in the dark I had touched bottom. I had been "home to my mother." A sordid way of return, the reader may think; and yet, does not much of the best in life flower out of its small, apparently sordid, necessities?

But what was this return?

Nothing was apparently changed by it, and yet everything was really changed. It was a spiritual setting of one's house in order; a showing up of temporal things in the light of things eternal.

There comes a time for all of us when we are met by the need of some such setting in order. Surely the world is faced now by as crucial a need as it ever knew. Very terrible situations are starting up before us. In a few breathless, poignant months the

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old comfortable ways of half the world have been trampled into blood and destruction. We stand still, appalled, asking ourselves how we may meet these overwhelming catastrophes. I answer in all seriousness and with a deep conviction that it can be done only by going home to our mother. Only those of us can withstand the awful present who have the ability to enter into spiritual sanctuaries. Only the things of the spirit can shelter us; only our souls the big

guns cannot blow to atoms. Health and wealth, ease, prosperity, security, where are they now? Ask Belgium. Ask Poland. Nay, ask half mankind.

“Be still and know that I am God.” Oh, little goddaughter, this is the real going home to one’s mother. I can ask no more golden talisman for you to hold fast, through all the years to come and on into eternity, than this magic gift of the spiritual return.









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